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## ABSTRACT

There is a growing trend among universities to regard the offering of a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree as a necessary element in efforts to improve the status of the university. This paper discusses reasons for the rapid expansion of Ed.D. programs, the likely results of this phenomenon, and what this trend means for school administrators in the field. The increase in the number of institutions that offer the Ed.D. in educational administration has been partly influenced by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPB) which has advocated the doctorate as a prerequisite for entry in the educational administration profession and for national certification of educational administrators. Analysis of state certification standards reveals that there is little agreement regarding administrator licensure criteria. To ascertain the response of professors of educational administration to the recommendations of the NPB, questionnaires were sent to 176 professors from master's level institutions, 228 from sixth year or specialist institutions, and 288 from institutions offering the doctorate. Analysis of the data (65 percent return rate) indicated that professors from master's and specialist programs tend to be in greater opposition to requiring the doctorate for licensure than professors from institutions offering the terminal degree. A total of 51.7 percent of the respondents disagree with the concept of a national board issuing a certification examination. (IAH)

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# CATCH THE 'D' TRAIN

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## Catch the 'D' Train

From the far reaches of academia, if you listen carefully, you can hear the cry All Aboard proclaiming that the 'D' train is ready to leave the station. The 'D' train is similar to the story frequently found as part of the plot in an old west movie. You know the one where the civic leaders are determined to get the train to come through their town. Without a railroad the town will soon be a ghost town - with the train comes prosperity and recognition. As it goes in the old west so it goes in modern halls of academia. Universities large and small, public and private are clamoring to get the 'D' train to come through their campus to hook their boxcars on a freight train racing across the academic frontier, a freight train loaded with practice-oriented doctoral degrees, particularly the Ed.D. Many contemporary universities consider the doctoral train the fast track to the land of milk and honey - status as a university. But what does it really mean? Why the rapid expansion of Ed.D. programs? What are the likely results of this phenomenon? Finally, what does it mean for school administrators in the field?

## Historical Perspective

In 1920 the School of Education at Harvard University announced its intention to offer a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree. This move avoided confrontation with traditional oriented members of the Harvard faculty who held to the idea that Ph.D. degrees were awarded for advanced scholarship and original research. Harvard's Ed.D. was designed for advanced scholarship and applied research. This move by Harvard, along with the merger 22 years earlier of Teachers College with Columbia University, placed schools of education as distinct units within universities (CA Postsecondary Education Committee, 1987). This move both elevated and isolated education as an academic discipline.

The concept of the Ed.D. was widely accepted and, by 1940, 24 institutions were offering the Ed.D.; 67 by 1960; 97 by 1970; and 128 by 1982 - 86 which offered a Ph.D. in education as well as an Ed.D. (Andersen cited in CA Postsecondary Education Committee, 1987). Studies starting as early as the 1930s and continuing to the present show little differences between the Ed.D. and Ph.D.

So why have we seen such an increase in the number of institutions that offer the Ed.D. in educational administration and leadership? Perhaps part of the answer could be that there is a genuine need for more individuals holding the doctorate to fill positions in leadership. The National Policy Board (NPB) representing a number of professional organizations has advocated that the doctorate become a prerequisite for entry in the educational administration profession. Additionally, there are a number of middle aged baby boomers raised on America's golden years of education and hungry for further credentials. And, many of the choicest positions in school administration either require or strongly prefer the doctorate for consideration. But these are only a few of the potential reasons for the speed with which the 'D' train is making its way across the country.

A further explanation can be found in the politics of higher education. What is going on across America is a fight between the haves and have nots in higher education, between the universities of the states and the state universities, between the heartland and the hinterland. Graduate education represents such a major portion of the future of this aging nation that there is a virtual scramble for a market share.

So we have an aging baby boomer population reared on the belief that education is the great equalizer and super vocational card; we have school systems that advertise their administrative positions requiring the doctorate for consideration; we have the universities anxious to capture a portion of the expanding graduate market; and finally, we have the professional organizations lining up in favor of the Ed.D. as terminal degree for practice.

In the spring of 1989 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPB) consisting of representatives from ten leading professional organizations issued Improving the Preparation of School Administration. The NPB organizations include:

- American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- American Association of School Administrators
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Association of School Business Officials
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Council of Elementary School Principals
- National Council of Professors of Educational Administration
- National School Boards Association
- University Council for Educational Administration

The purpose of this group has been to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of current programs and report and recommend strategies to strengthen administrator preparation. When the NPB released its first set of recommendations in the spring of 1989, there were nine points in three categories (NPBA, 1989).

The first of these categories focused on People. There are three subcategories: (1) schools must engage in vigorous recruitment strategies. This is needed to bring quality to the candidate pool and bring women and people of color to educational administration programs; (2) the NPB called for a dramatic rise in the entrance standards to preparation programs; and (3) stated that the quality of faculty in preparation programs must be ensured.

The second category focused on Programs: (1) the Ed.D. was to become the prerequisite for national certification and state licensure; (2) each program must include one full-time year of academic residency and one full-time year of field residency; (3) training programs must establish formal relationships between universities and school districts; and (4) all programs must transmit a common core of knowledge.

The final category identified in this initial NPB report was Assessment. There were two major initiatives addressed: (1) it was recommended that a national certification examination for licensure be created, and (2) that the NPB establish an accreditation process for administrator preparation programs.

Reactions in the professional literature to the original nine recommendation of the NPB were not positive (McLaughlin, 1990). Over the ensuing months, the recommendations were discussed and modified by the NPB.

In March of 1990, the NPB issued a revised set of standards that moved away from some of the earlier recommendations and expanded others. For example, the NPB now calls for national certification at two levels. An entry level certificate would be granted to individuals holding a master's degree in a teaching area plus 30 additional credits in leadership. Advanced certification would require the doctorate in educational administration (NASSP, 1991).

The March 1990 standards identified a specific knowledge base that embodied the social sciences, learning theory and practice, leadership and management functions, policy development, assessment, and ethical issues. These March 1990 standards also called for a delivery system that was, in part, site based, included performance based instruction, and called on programs to engage in active recruiting efforts.

Finally, the March 1990 NPB proposals indicated that the public must be involved in the evaluation of educational administration programs. Its position was that external evaluation and assessment would assist in strengthening the field.

### Decade of Ed.D. Expansion

Prior to the recommendations of the NPB and the specific point of requiring an Ed.D. as a prerequisite for national certification and state licensure, colleges of education across America were speeding up the movement into more applied doctoral work. Acceptance by



the professions and by higher education has led to the continued expansion of the Ed.D. degree. In the 1980s, over 45 new Ed.D. programs were initiated. Twenty-two of these were in educational administration and/or leadership.

For many of these institutions the Ed.D. in administration and leadership represented their first doctoral program. A common theme for these 22 institutions is that they are, for the most part, regional universities serving a regional clientele.

A further analysis of these 22 programs revealed that in order to offer a degree and attract students many institutions felt they needed to have some type of special or innovative characteristic. For example, the University of Vermont is training administrators for rural schools. Its doctorate is based at the University and programming was broadened to include faculty from colleges other than education. The University of Northern Iowa is the only state supported institution in Iowa to offer the Ed.D. Nova is a large university without walls with a considerable amount of course content delivered at sites throughout the country. Nova has a university with a campus in Florida but delivers course work in various locations across the U.S.

With this historical background to assess the extensive effort by an increasing number of universities to offer the Ed.D., one is struck by the implications of this rapid expansion. Why have so many universities begun to expand into doctoral programming? Are there performance advantages for individuals holding the degree? Are there any certification advantages for individuals holding the doctorate?

### The Certification Mess

With the first issue of the National Policy Board's recommendations there was a call for the creation of a national certification examination for licensure. In June of 1990 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration issued a work plan which indicated that by 1994 it would begin to define a national

certification program. In part, that call may have been in response to what we currently find.

A review of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (Mastain, 1988) manual and calls to state licensure agencies resulted in an astounding discovery. There is little consistency across this country with regard to certification for school administrators and there is subsequently no state that issues blanket reciprocity. Thirty-six states require at least a master's degree for principal and superintendent certification, 14 states have various other requirements, and the District of Columbia does not certify but allows local education agencies to do so. Of the 14 states that do not specify the master's degree for certification there are a variety of specific requirements. For example, California requires a candidate to have a fifth year beyond the bachelor degree and an in-state training program for preliminary licensure. Massachusetts requires 24 semester hours beyond the bachelor degree, Nevada requires 18 semester credits for a limited license, South Carolina requires a doctorate or two year post bachelor program of study, Vermont requires graduation from a Vermont approved administrator preparation program, and Michigan does not issue administrator licenses. In those states that require teaching experience prior to the issuance of administrator licenses, the range of experience is from one to eight years. Only three states that issue administrator licenses do not require some sort of teaching experience; they are New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Oregon.

So to summarize the certification mess, many states offer provisional licenses and then require additional credit and/or administrative experience for other levels of licensing. Twelve states require that candidates for licensure pass some form of administrative licensure examination. Several states have an identified core curriculum that a candidate must have taken prior to the issuance of a license to practice, and an increasing number of states are requiring that all candidates for administrative license have some sort of administrative field experience. Finally, many states require a sixth year certificate or specialist degree for superintendent licensure.



What is clear from this analysis is that there is no agreement regarding administrator licensure criteria. The confusion among state agencies regarding what is an appropriate program of study for administrator licensure is equally apparent in the variety of preparation programs found throughout the country. This certification mess can lead one to an erroneous conclusion; that there is little apparent value in preparation programs. If state agencies and universities cannot agree on licensure standards perhaps that means that there are no skills or knowledge prerequisites to the field of educational administration and leadership.

What do the professors of educational administration and leadership view as valuable potential contributions from the National Policy Board for Educational Administration?

### Design of the Study

In order to ascertain the response of professors of educational administration to the recommendations of the NPB, a systematic sample was drawn from the Educational Administration Directory (Lilley, 1990). To get at the variance that may exist between institutions offering different degree programs, a sample was selected that would represent professors from institutions offering only the master's, those offering a degree through the sixth year or specialist, and those offering the terminal doctorate degree. To assure a significance of .05 level of confidence, the following samples were drawn: 176 professors from master level institutions; 222 sixth year/specialist professors; and 288 professors from institutions offering the doctorate (Udinsky, 1981).

A questionnaire was constructed that paralleled the nine recommendations from the first policy board document. Each of the nine areas was directly quoted and, where necessary, recommendations were paraphrased so they could be included in the questionnaire. A total of 19 questions were included in the questionnaire. It was considered an important research question to determine the level of agreement with the nine policy board recommendations by these selected professors and, further, what

impact they believe each recommendation, if implemented, would have on their programs. A five point Likert scale was constructed, the scale that assessed agreement was distributed from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree, and the scale that assessed impact asked respondents to select from a range of 1 - minimal impact to 5 - significant impact. Finally, the questionnaire allowed and encouraged respondents to comment in an open-ended section.

After the population was selected from Lilley's guide and the questionnaire constructed, a procedure was designed to mail and collect the data. Each selected respondent received a packet which included a form letter describing the nature of the study and the data collection procedure. Also in the packet was the stamped, addressed questionnaire and a stamped addressed postcard that was to be returned when the respondent had completed and mailed the questionnaire. The postcard was returned independently and through a code each respondent could be checked off the master mailing list. This procedure allowed the respondents to remain anonymous and it allowed the researchers to maintain an accurate list for the second mailing. The first mailing was conducted in mid June of 1990 and the follow-up was done in October of 1990. This second mailing was sent only to those selected individuals who had not returned the coded post card during the initial mailing.

The data analysis was conducted using the SPSS-X RELEASE 2.0. Descriptive data was displayed, a one-way analysis of the variance was conducted, and finally, for the comparisons of intergroup variance, the Scheffe test was employed.

### Data Analysis

A return rate of 65% was achieved after both mailings were completed. If unreadable and late returns are counted, the total return rate percent approaches 66%. An internal return rate for each of the three institution classifications revealed that the master's group had a return rate of 46%, 69% for sixth year/specialist, and 67% for the doctoral sample.

Question 11 of the survey asked respondents for their reaction to the NPB recommendation that "The doctorate in educational administration (Ed. D.) be a prerequisite to national certification and state licensure for full-time administrators in charge of a school or school system." The professors were asked for their personal response to this and the likely impact it would have on their program. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1  
Doctorate Required for National Certification  
Personal Response

		<u>Total</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>MS</u>	<u>Ed.S.</u>	<u>Ed.D.</u> <u>Ph.D.</u>
Strongly Disagree	1	38.3	46.5	38.8	32.5
	2	20.9	21.8	24.0	18.3
	3	15.9	13.9	16.5	16.8
	4	11.8	7.9	9.9	15.7
Strongly Agree	5	13.2	9.9	10.7	16.8

An analysis of the data indicates that there is a visible trend for those from master's and specialist programs to be in greater opposition to requiring the doctorate for licensure than those from institutions offering the terminal degree. A statistically significant difference (F probability of .0051) was shown in the responses of the three groups. The Scheffe test revealed the variance to be only between the masters and doctoral groups.

**Table 2**  
**Impact on Department**

		<u>Total</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>MS</u>	<u>Ed.S.</u>	<u>Ed.D.</u> <u>Ph.D.</u>
Minimal Impact	1	13.5	20.0	7.5	13.3
	2	8.3	6.0	5.0	11.2
	3	11.7	6.0	6.7	17.0
	4	19.0	12.0	17.5	23.9
Significant Impact	5	47.5	56.0	63.3	34.6

Regarding the impact the recommendation would have on their programs, the percent indicating either strong or significant impact totaled 66.5%., with the MA group coming in at 68.0%, the Ed.S. at 80.8%, and the Ed.D. at 58.5%. A statistically significant difference (F probability of .0002) was shown in responses of the three groups. The Scheffe test revealed the variance to be only between the Ed.S. and Ed.D. groups.

Question 18 asked the respondents for their reaction to the NPB recommendation that "A national professional standards board consisting primarily of practicing school administrators be established to develop and administer a national certification examination and that states be encouraged to require candidates for licensure to pass this examination." They were asked for their personal response to this and the likely impact it would have on their program. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3**  
**National Standards Board to Administer a**  
**National Examination**  
**Personal Response**

		<u>Total</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>MS</u>	<u>Ed.S.</u>	<u>Ed.D.</u> <u>Ph.D.</u>
Strongly Disagree	1	35.0	39.2	33.9	33.0
	2	16.7	17.6	16.5	18.3
	3	22.6	20.6	25.6	22.5
	4	12.2	11.8	10.7	12.0
Strongly Agree	5	13.5	10.8	13.2	14.1

A total of 51.7% of the respondents either strongly disagree or disagree with a national board issuing a certification examination. All three subgroups show relative conformation on this issue with the MA at 56.8%, Ed.S. at 50.4%, and the Ed. D. at 51.3% indicating either strong disagreement or disagreement. An analysis of the variance showed no statistically significant difference in the responses of the three groups.

Table 4  
Impact on Department

		<u>Total</u>	<u>MA</u> <u>MS</u>	<u>Ed.S.</u>	<u>Ed.D.</u> <u>Ph.D.</u>
Minimal Impact	1	13.1	14.4	7.6	15.1
	2	9.1	9.3	5.9	10.3
	3	30.3	29.9	33.9	28.6
	4	19.8	19.6	16.9	21.6
Significant Impact	5	27.7	26.8	35.6	24.3

Data showing the responses to the impact the recommendation, if implemented, would have on their programs is also relatively close. A total of 47.5% indicate either strong or significant impact if a national board issues a certification examination. This is further broken down into the following, MA 46.4%, Ed.S. 52.5%, and Ed.D. 45.9% indicating they believe there will be a strong or significant impact on programs. An analysis of variance indicated a statistically significant difference in the response of the three groups at the F probability of .0483. Thus with a predetermined significance level of .05, the variance is just within the significant range. The variance was so small that the Scheffe test did not further illustrate the variance between the three groups.

### Conclusions

One of the respondents stated the case for many when he/she wrote that:



These standards are biased in favor of large universities and large public school/districts. I believe curriculum consultants and other district offices should have doctoral degrees (many in curricular field(s) rather than in administration). But, I do not feel school principals should be required to have this. I further believe that in small schools and some cultural areas the doctorate would be threatening to parents and faculty.

With well over one half of the respondents stating opposition to the requirement of the doctorate, for licensure the above comment would be expected. Especially when it is revealed that this individual represents an institution at which the masters is the highest degree offered in educational administration. But, one of the respondents from a doctorate granting institution stated that, " . . . Item #11 reeks of market protectionism." While there is greater opposition to the requirement of the doctorate for licensure at institutions granting only the master's degree, it is of note that all three levels of institutions oppose this by a margin of greater than 50%. Even though it is difficult to know the specific rationale of the respondents it is worth noting that all three groups feel that such a requirement would have a significant impact on their programs.

Another interesting finding from this study had to do with the issue of the certification exam and a national board to set standards. What could it possibly mean that this issue just barely failed to generate support? Just over one half of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the concept. Which leave just under one half (48.3%) either neutral or supporting the notion. Once again, it is impossible to note the motivation, but over one half of the respondents indicated that a national board and exam would have a significant impact on their programs.

Perhaps the following respondent stated the position for many when he/she wrote "Too many 'professional' administrators making up a national exam might come from from a heavily management

background, not from a background emphasizing great teaching and liberating thinking." There is a pervasive aura in the comments from the respondents of distrust regarding national testing, and the setting of national norms. It may arise from the fear that a national test will lead to a national curriculum which will take away local university control of curriculum. A respondent from a doctoral granting institution summed it up best when she/he wrote, "I distrust standardized tests and national norms."

### Recommendations

This is what we know, there is a national certification mess out there regarding what constitutes appropriate standards for an administrator. No two states agree on what should be included in licensure requirements. Second, there is a runaway doctoral train crisscrossing the country. Many institutions are scrambling to get on this train with new doctoral programs popping up all over. Finally, professors of school administration do agree on what should happen vis-a-vis requiring the doctorate for entry level administrative positions but do not agree as strongly on a national certification board or examination. So, with all the confusion around where does it leave us?

Is the fact that there are 50 different licensure standards for school administrators a cause for concern? This question must be asked and consensus reached before a coordinated effort can be mounted to place a national certification proposal on the agenda for discussion. Fifty separate standards may be viewed in at least two general ways. First, it could be viewed as representing one of the most critical qualities of public education in the country - state control. Another view is that it is symptomatic of the lack of agreement regarding a knowledge base for school administration. Therefore, the first recommendation that we place on the table for discussion is: There should be a national dialogue on what having 50 different licensure requirements means to the profession. Second, this dialogue must begin to discuss the formulation of an agreed upon knowledge base for school administrators.

Other recommendations include a need to get at what the professors really mean when they indicate that various NPB recommendations will have an impact on their programs. With the current data we can only speculate what is meant. Further investigations need to be conducted to bring some clarity to this issue.

Finally, with just under half of the respondents of this national survey indicating neutrality or some support for a national certification exam, a further investigation must be undertaken to ascertain what this means.

There is 'D' train, it is leaving the station, and a number of regional universities are scrambling to get on board. The NPB has issued a set of recommendations that call for, in part, a national certification board and examination, and two levels of certification in which the advanced step would require the doctorate. How the field responds to these initiatives will in a large measure determine whether they are implemented. If we are to improve our profession, strengthen our administrator preparation programs, and carve a vision for educational administration in the future we must do so with information generated through research. Program improvement efforts are only as good as the data on which improvement plans are made. Let's study, conduct research, and establish a collaborative vision for the improvement of educational administration.

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